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## Contributors Around the Web, II

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## Contributors Around the Web, II

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October 1, 2009 in [Uncategorized](#) by [The China Beat](#) | [Permalink](#)

1. [Leslie T. Chang](#) has been recognized by PEN with a [2009 Literary Award](#) for research nonfiction for her book, *Factory Girls*.

2. Jeffrey Wasserstrom has a new piece at *Foreign Policy*, "[The Autocrats' Learning Curve](#)":

It's impossible to pinpoint when, exactly, the CCP went from looking like it was on its last legs to looming as a global *force majeure*. But in fact, the mistaken predictions of my generation may have had much to do with it — and with events in Berlin as well.

I learned why a decade ago, at a Budapest conference devoted to revisiting the end of the wall. After a presentation by a group of American print and broadcast journalists, including *New York Times* writers Flora Lewis and R.W. Apple Jr., Central European University historian István Rév made a comment that, to him, was off the cuff, but to many of us was stunningly profound. The journalists had expressed pride in how they had described and analyzed breaking news events 10 years earlier. But they lamented their failure to predict sooner the dramatic changes these protests would yield. They failed to foresee that the marches and rallies were not just newsworthy — they were of great historical consequence.

Rév, however, thanked the journalists for their "failure" to predict; he and the countless others who had longed for change owed them a debt of gratitude for their lack of clairvoyance. Living under Communist Party rule, he said, taught people that taking actions deemed of "world historical importance" would end in bloodshed. In essence, if the world had believed the wall would come down, many ordinary citizens in communist-run parts of Europe would have stayed home, fearing that the governments of the Iron Curtain would act forcefully to crush their protests. What happened instead was that the world's disbelief in radical change emboldened the participants in the European upheaval of 1989. Ironically, the marches' perceived futility helped make the year's miracles possible.

That conference in Budapest led me to a different but complementary conclusion about prediction relating to China. Namely, one reason the CCP had endured was that, in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 1991 implosion of the Soviet Union, its demise had seemed so inevitable.

3. *Dissent Magazine* has an online symposium on "[Two Decades After the Fall](#)," which includes essays by Guobin Yang ("[Visions of the Pro-Democracy Movement](#)") and Jeffrey Wasserstrom ("[Patterns of Chinese Protest—1919, 1989, 2009](#)").

4. Kenneth Pomeranz is featured in Public Radio International's The World's five-part feature on "[Created in China](#)." You can hear the audio (and read a transcript) to Part I [here](#).

5. Geremie Barmé edits *China Heritage Quarterly*, which has a new issue out exploring the theme "[The Heritage of T'ien Hsia, All-Under-Heaven](#)," examining the Republican-era publication, 天下月刊.